

# What is the World Handicap System™?

The World Handicap System (WHS™) unifies the six existing handicap systems and provides every player in the world with a consistent measure of ability. The WHS enables players of different abilities, from anywhere in the world, to play with or compete against others on a fair basis.

The World Handicap System is comprised of the *Rules of Handicapping* and the Course Rating System™. The *Rules of Handicapping* replaces the USGA Handicap System™, which has been in place since 1911, and the USGA Course Rating System has become the Course Rating System.

These are the key topic areas from which we expect you to receive the most questions from your members and guests. This serves as a quick reference guide, but please refer to the *Rules of Handicapping* for more detail.

WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM



For more detailed  
information visit  
[www.usga.org/whs](http://www.usga.org/whs)

## Handicap Index® Calculation Changes

With the World Handicap System, a player's best 8 scores out of the last 20 are used, not best 10 out of 20.

## Net Double Bogey Replaces ESC (Equitable Stroke Control)

Net double bogey has replaced ESC. *Net double bogey* = double bogey + any handicap strokes a player is entitled to receive based on their Course Handicap™.

## Changes to Course Handicap

Slope Rating®, Course Rating™ and par are now used to determine a Course Handicap, so expect to see more change in your players' Course Handicaps from tee to tee. As long as par is the same, there is no longer a need to apply any adjustments when players compete from different tees.

## Introduction of Playing Handicap™

Playing Handicap is a new term that represents the number of strokes you actually play with during a round. Most of the time, it will be the same as your Course Handicap, but it may change based on the format of play and handicap allowance applied.

## Playing Conditions Calculation

The playing conditions calculation is an automatic calculation that compares actual scores to the expected scores made each day. It is designed to account for days when the golf course plays significantly easier or more difficult than normal due to weather or course conditions. There is nothing you need to do except encourage players to post their scores immediately following their round, and work with your greens committee/superintendent to be sure that course difficulty is maintained on a consistent basis.

## Running Club Events

There are three key changes that may impact the way you run a club event:

- With the new maximum Handicap Index of 54.0, you may wish to consider using flights so that players with similar abilities will be grouped together.
- Since a Handicap Index is now updated daily, the recommendation is for a Committee to use the Handicap Index at the start of the competition for all rounds.
- Handicap allowance recommendations for various formats of play have changed. The new recommendations are found in Appendix C of the *Rules of Handicapping*.

## Safeguards and Handicap Controls

Two modern safeguards were introduced in 2020:

- A soft cap and hard cap automatically limit the extreme upward movement of a Handicap Index.
- An automatic Handicap Index reduction takes place when a player posts an exceptional score.

The Handicap Committee still serves an important role, but these safeguards will make their jobs easier.

## Handicap Management Products

To ensure consistency of the World Handicap System, the Handicap Index of every player in the United States is now calculated and issued by the USGA. You will need to confirm that any product you use has access to the USGA Data Services platform.

## Contact Information

The best place to start is the Allied Golf Association in your area.

You can also reach the USGA Handicap Department directly by phone (908.234.2300 x5) or email ([hdcquestions@usga.org](mailto:hdcquestions@usga.org)).